

SUN, SEA & FAMILIARITY



A BRIEF MIGRATION
HISTORY OF CYPRUS



DISCOVER THE HISTORY
THAT SHAPED YOUR
NEW HOME

A BRIEF HISTORY



SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW CYPRUS?

We're going to take a journey through the history of Cyprus, and its relationship with Britain that paved the way for its appeal to British retirees today!

We'll gain an insight into the Cypriot perspective, as we hear from Tasos, a Greek-Cypriot who first came to the UK for university, and now plans to settle here.



Tasos in Greece, Summer '22

Cyprus is strategically located at a crossroads between Europe, Asia & Africa and has therefore long been desired by many imperial powers as a highly valuable asset for trade.

The island has changed hands numerous times since it was first inhabited, starting with the early Minoans, who arrived from Crete, then the Mycenaean Greeks, many of whom migrated to Cyprus during their rule. The Assyrian, Persian, Roman, and Venetian Empires are just some of the imperial powers who tried their hand at ruling Cyprus, each to varying degrees of success. Throughout the many changes of power, the island's population consistently remained predominantly of Greek descent.

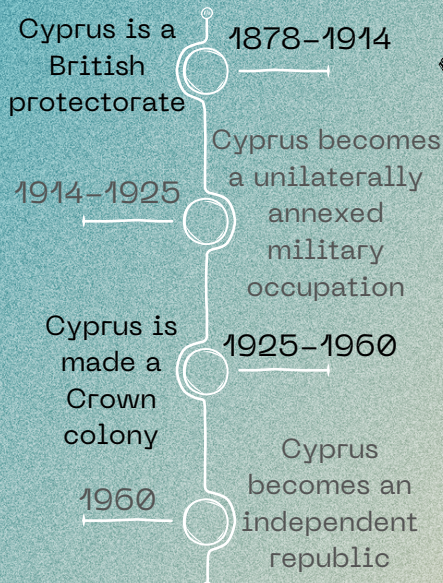
THE ORIGINAL SETTLERS



The Ottoman Empire ruled for more than 300 years before Cyprus came under British control through the 1878 Cyprus Convention. The Ottoman Sultan handed over Cyprus in exchange for the promise of British protection of Turkey from Russian aggression.

THE BRITISH OCCUPATION

A TIMELINE OF EVENTS...



LONG-TERM RAMIFICATIONS

HI TASOS, CAN YOU EXPLAIN YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF CYPRUS?

TASOS: Yes, growing up in Cyprus I noticed many reminders of the British occupation, like English being an official language, along with Greek and Turkish. Also a lot of our infrastructure was built by the British, particularly our road systems, which look exactly like yours in the UK.

But the most obvious British legacy is the military bases that still operate in Cyprus, one of which is right next to my family home in Limassol. There are whole villages around the bases that are exclusively British, filled with people who work on them. It's like entering a mini Britain!

A BRIEF HISTORY



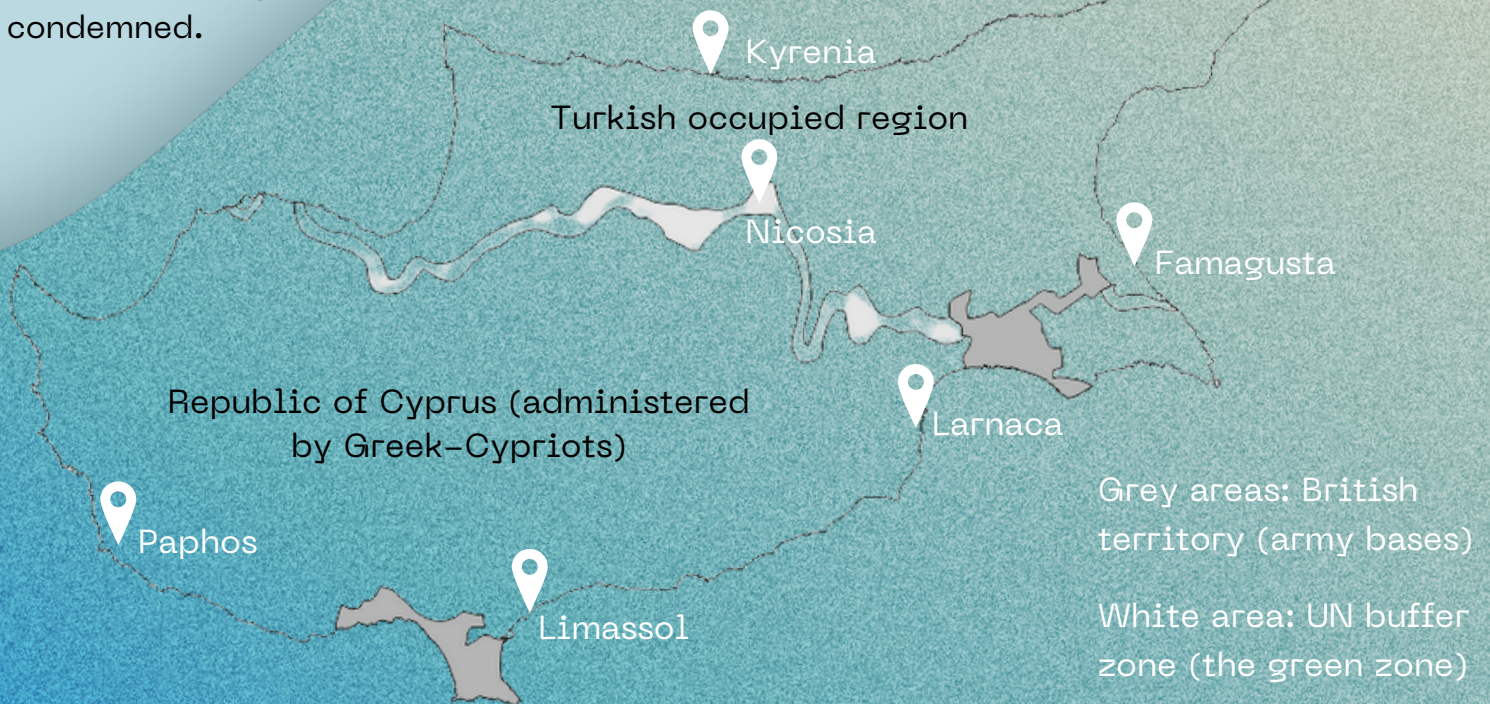
The majority Greek-speaking Cypriot population had long desired to unify Cyprus with Greece, a process called 'enosis'. When Britain made Cyprus a Crown colony in 1925, Greek-Cypriots began a campaign for this unification.

Britain refused to co-operate and after many years of disagreement, Greek-Cypriots decided that the only remaining option was an uprising. A violent campaign was launched by the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters in 1955. This lasted until 1959, when Britain granted Cyprus independence, provided it kept two army bases on the island.

After gaining their independence, violence that had been brewing between the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, broke out, as Turkey strongly opposed enosis, which Greek-Cypriots were determined to pursue. Many Turkish migrants had settled in Cyprus during the Ottoman rule, and they now constituted ~18% of the island's population, which led Turkey to claim a right to protect their interests.

Tensions reached a head in 1974, when Turkey invaded Cyprus, in response to a Greek military coup that intended to complete enosis. A ceasefire was negotiated by dividing the island in two, and creating a UN-patrolled buffer zone separating the two sides. Today, Turkey is the only country in the world to recognise the region that it occupies as its own state, a move that was widely condemned.

AN ISLAND DIVIDED...



THE CYPRIOT DIASPORA



REFUGEES IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY

The division of Cyprus forced Greek-Cypriots who lived in the Turkish-occupied region to flee their homes. Approximately 150,000 Greek-Cypriots were made refugees, (that's over a quarter of the total population of Cyprus), whilst a lesser number of Turkish-Cypriots were displaced from the Republic of Cyprus and forced to migrate North. Whole families and communities were torn apart.



THE HUMAN IMPACT: LET'S ASK TASOS

HOW HAS MIGRATION INFLUENCED YOUR FAMILY MAP?

TASOS: Before the Turkish invasion, people were already looking abroad to countries with bigger economies, as they had job opportunities that just weren't available in Cyprus. Many of my ancestors moved around the world, including to the UK and to Australia.

But when Turkey invaded, the meaning of migration changed. It was no longer just an exciting potential option. It was a forceful process that tore my family from their homes and their communities. They were made refugees, and had to build new homes, new lives, from nothing.

Greek-Cypriot families are typically very big and close-knit, and mine is no exception. But the invasion forced my ancestors to spread apart, as they had to flee from their homes in Famagusta, a city now occupied by Turkey. They went to wherever they could find safety, spreading all around the island. Some even migrated abroad.

They took their keys with them, thinking that they would soon get to return, but almost 50 years have passed now and nothing has changed.

Things were very fluid that first year, as the three major cities in the unoccupied region struggled to accommodate all of the refugees. Tents were set up as the government worked to provide houses. A lot of my family moved to Greece, or other countries around the world, and some still live abroad now. Many returned to Cyprus, but even now, we're much more spread around the island.



FAMILIAR BY DESIGN



THE CYPRIOT PERSPECTIVE

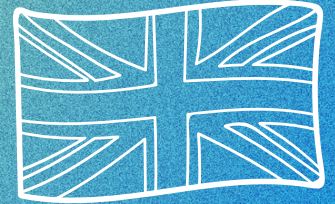
WHAT SIMILIARITIES HAVE YOU NOTICED BETWEEN BRITAIN AND CYPRUS?

TASOS: The first similarity I noticed when I came to Britain was that we both drive on left. And not only that, but the design of a lot of our infrastructure is the same, because the British did a lot of construction in Cyprus. Our roads and road signs look almost identical to yours.

Also, we're all exposed to English in Cyprus, so I was very familiar with that. From music to films, if something is popular in the UK, we'll know about it in Cyprus too. We also have big fan clubs for Premier League teams, so we engage a lot with UK popular sport and culture. This is not only because we do have a lot of Brits in Cyprus, but also because a lot of Cypriots, who moved to the UK after the Turkish invasion, later returned to Cyprus, bringing back with them certain aspects of British culture.

They brought your famous fish and chips, as well as mince pies, and the concept of pubs. We typically enjoy a coffee after work, rather than a beer, and whilst coffee shops are definitely still the most common, you can now find lots of pubs in Cyprus too.

BUILT BY BRITS



'The British provided the infrastructure for modernisation. This distinctly British infrastructure...has allowed Cyprus to take that step into the modern era more easily than some of its neighbours.'

KYLIE SERETIS, 'IDENTITIES AND EMPIRE: CYPRUS UNDER BRITISH RULE', 2005

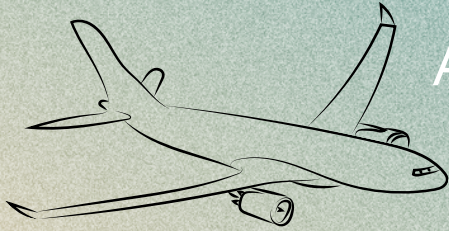
Whilst we must remember that British construction in Cyprus was primarily carried out in self-interest, Britain did play a significant role in developing Cypriot infrastructure, which explains the similarities that we see today.



IT'S A TWO-WAY STREET



We've established how the familiarity and home comforts that you can expect in Cyprus make it a very appealing prospect to move to for your retirement. But all too often we forget to recognise that this works both ways. The legacy of the British occupation in Cyprus also attracts many Cypriots, like Tasos, to the UK.



A FIRST-HAND INSIGHT...

HOW DO YOU THINK MIGRATION HAS INFLUENCED CYPRUS?

TASOS: Cyprus has been influenced a lot by British migrants, especially retirees. Paphos especially has become very popular with foreigners. They've changed it completely, with so many new housing developments by the seafront, where few Cypriots live because it's not close to the jobs, but retirees love, so it feels very British. Most of the seafront restaurants even serve UK home comforts like jacket potatoes and English muffins!

Meanwhile, a lot of young Cypriots are leaving to study abroad. Those who return benefit Cyprus because they bring back skills and knowledge that we didn't have on the island before. But the problem for Cyprus is that, especially after the 2012-13 financial crisis, a lot of young Cypriots like me are settling abroad. So the young, working Cypriot population goes down whilst the number of foreign retirees goes up.

There's pros and cons whichever way you look at it. Of course retirees aren't working, but those who have migrated usually spend more money and boost the economy that way. On one hand, the demand from retirees for new housing developments has boosted the construction industry and created more jobs for Cypriots, but on the other hand it has also driven up housing prices, making it very hard for young Cypriots to get their own place.

Many migrants also invest a lot of money into the economy in the hopes of obtaining a 'golden passport', which is where you are fast-tracked for Cypriot citizenship if you bring a certain amount of money into the island. This system has had some scandals, but on the whole it helped a lot to get us out of our financial crisis.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO MIGRATE TO ENGLAND?

TASOS: The reputation of UK universities of course played a big role, but I was also influenced by the fact that moving to Britain has been tried and tested by many Cypriots. I knew lots of people who had been through the process and they came out of it with great job prospects. I also have some family in England, and knew to expect some home comforts, due to our cultural connections with Britain.

Also, we're all taught English in school, and I was very familiar with having to speak it in Cyprus, which made it easy to look to the UK for my studies.

Like many Cypriots, I also studied A-Levels on top of my public school exams (we do this in after-school classes), which really solidified a UK uni as the obvious choice.



IT'S A TWO-WAY STREET



DEMISTIFYING THE MIGRANT

The term "migrant" is heavily stigmatised in the UK, as it has become strongly associated with divisive, scaremongering political rhetoric. It might make you uncomfortable to identify as a migrant. But the reality is that if you move abroad, this is what you are. 'Migrant' isn't a dirty word. You are no different to Cypriots that come to the UK, or people from any other country for that matter.

...Just like them, you will influence your new home with culture and traditions from your original home country...

...Just like them, you will contribute to changing population demographics...

...Just like them, some people will perceive you as a threat to their resources...

BRITAIN IS NOT JUST AN EMIGRANT STATE

"People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture... if there is any fear that it might be swamped people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in".

MARGARET THATCHER, INTERVIEW FOR GRANADA 'WORLD IN ACTION', 1978.

The history of Brits moving abroad is a long one, throughout which Britain has both not cared about the impact of external migration on host countries and been terrified of the impacts of migrants arriving on UK soil. Opinions like the above have dominated the British discourse on immigrants.

Being a conscious migrant means maintaining that self-awareness that we are fortunate, not entitled, to get to choose to move abroad.

SO... LET'S GO!

Now you can plan your move in the good conscience that you know how your new home came to be an option to you and how to be a respectful and self-aware new citizen of Cyprus!

